

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

LOVING NATION, ENDORSING THE ECCLESIAL UNIVERSAL: A ROMANIAN PERSPECTIVE¹

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ABSTRACT. This theological and philosophical article aims for a solution to the provocation of nationalism and offers a series of interconnected arguments for this purpose. In doing so it makes use of Romanian cultural realities and sources (stances of Dumitru Stăniloae, of Daniil Sandu Tudor and others, as well as dictionary entries). The considerations start from the topic of politics and of what politics consists of – ideology. Turning towards ecclesiology and social theology, the relationship between hate and phyletism is assessed. Considering this relationship, the analysis shows that, from an Orthodox point of view, true nationalism should be understood as a form of love – corruptible but legitimate. Ideological nationalism is identified as its opposite. The Gordian Knot of ideological nationalism is found to be a false understanding of “national interests”. Finally, a second relation is investigated – the one between the national and the universal, seen from Romanian premises.

Keywords: nationalism, patriotism, universalism, One Church, identity, love, ideology, phyletism, autocephaly

¹ This article is based on a presentation held at the 2019 Annual Conference of the European Academy of Religion. It completes an older strain of research, which had its first written expression (with a different emphasis) in: Paul Andrei Mucichescu, ‘Identitate națională și eclesială’, *Studia Theologica Orthodoxa Doctoralia Napocensia* II, no. 2 (2019): 110–26. The mentioned EuARE conference paper, representing a draft, incomplete version of the present text, has been published by CEMES: Paul Andrei Mucichescu, ‘Loving the Nation as Endorsing the Ecclesial Universal. A Romanian Perspective’, in *National and Ecumenical Orthodoxy* (Thessaloniki: K. & M. Stamouli Publications, 2021), 125–43.

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Introduction and structure

Motto: “Lord! My people does not wash me off! I don’t wash away my people!”

(Nichita Stănescu)

“What is nationalism?” Seemingly, each possible answer to a “what is x?”-question is bound to the academic field answering it. However, in this particular case, the power of the stereotypical, unsophisticated answer is so impressive that the message of the political science fades and everyone feels entitled to an opinion. The present article will constitute a rather uncommon *theological* endeavour to find a way out of this pandemonium, following the footsteps of Father Dumitru Stăniloae. This approach concerning nationalism will start from contents which are being currently politicized into today’s common sense. However, it will not strive for an exhaustive summary of the historical and political dimension of the topic. Rather, the arguments to be offered will consider the essence of things, from a perspective which declares itself to be radically opposed to ideology: The present approach will be a *Christian* one. But it will also be an Orthodox one and a Romanian one.

What is a nation? According to a definition wide-spread in popular culture and which is (Neo)marxist (some of its promoters will be indicated below), a “nation” is a recently developed “myth”, sold to the masses by rulers; an instrument of exercising power over a territory which contains several ethnicities, most of which are discriminated against. Allegedly, it is a manipulative “narrative” which has led the world into two devastating wars. According to the other, almost-forgotten definition, which not long ago was still the textbook one in Romania and which during the ‘90s could also be found in the work of Adrian Hastings³, “nation” stands for a people sharing a common specific (and written) language, religion, culture, long history and same ethnic origins (a people inside of which ethnic minorities can choose to integrate). By the way, to the same extent as any concept of “race” is extraneous to the one of a nation, the concept of the consciousness of belonging together is intrinsic to it. What Hastings’ view stressed is the truth that the contemporary way in which the European nations are organized (i.e. in territorial, civic, ethnically-inclusive and constitutional states) has been historically encouraged and even shaped by the Church. Hasting, a catholic priest and scholar, has made important steps in showing that the history of nations is the history of the Christian civilization. But it can be argued that his related definition of “nationalism” still lacked the indication of the essential element of nationalism. Instead of delivering it, Hasting mainly addressed the

³ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997).

outline of what “nationalism” really means. By defining nationalism as the shared propensity towards establishing a nation-state, he only referred to a *manifestation* of that essential element, a manifestation bound to a specific historical stage. Not even “*deep horizontal comradeship*” within a nation, hits the nail on the head – a description made by Anderson⁴, which Hastings has subsequently endorsed⁵.

Before continuing, the kind of the present study should better be stated here, at the outset: This article started as a reaction to witnessing recent and current societal changes in Romania, through theological and philosophical lenses, a critical response which had the chance of being presented in the 2019 International Annual EuARe Conference. It started as an analysis by someone studying the theology of Dumitru Stăniloae and fairly familiar with Romanian history, as well as with many writings of the Romanian interwar-generation. The latter are authors which have recently been accused of holding far-right views. What those in power have made possible in 2015, through new amendments brought to the emergency ordinance nr. 31/2002, is the legal ban on praising most of the names which have brought the Romanian spirit to the level of universality, in what can be seen as a defence of communist verdicts. According to such a stance, admiration should be proscribed for anyone who was in any form linked to Romanian interwar right-wing politics or “ideas”. Names like the ones of Noica, Eliade, Vulcănescu, Țuțea, Cioran, Vintilă Horia, Nae Ionescu, Fr. Gheorghe Calciu and so many others (perhaps even Eugene Ionesco according to some), can now be blacklisted. Today, perhaps influenced by popular neoconservative rhetoric, the latest trend within (Romanian) Orthodox theology is to consider anything that had- or has to do with nationalism to be tainted and “unchristian”. To counterbalance this viewpoint⁶, after taking in consideration the circulating fashionable views, the present contribution basically claims to identify the right (and forgotten) solution to the dilemma of dealing with nationalism. The tone of this article is slightly polemical, but its aim is the one of *inviting reactions* to the proposed solution, in order to arrive at the Truth of the matter by way of dialogue and concerted analysis.

⁴ Benedict R. O’G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 7.

⁵ Hastings, *The construction of nationhood*, 25.

⁶ As an effect of such a point of departure in writing this research – societal conditions –, the text at hand has not followed the general path of first presenting an extensive scholarly material, thereafter discussing the issue and finally reaching a conclusion, all with the aim of going beyond what has already been said by contemporary scholars on the same subject. Most certainly, if the document “For the Life of the World” would have been published one year before it has been, the reflections of this article would have been triggered by it and would have adopted the usual pattern. (This introduction tries to compensate for this deficiency.) For the appraisal of the mentioned document, cf. section 3.3., below, including footnote number 81.

Returning now to the state of the research, Hastings' above-mentioned study should first of all be put in context. His important work can be considered a systematic critique of Eric Hobsbawm's Marxist treatise entitled "Nations and nationalism since 1780" (1991). With the passing of time, the latter became a reference work, for a series of reasons: It commented almost all the existing literature at the time of its publication; it contained many confirmed observations (e.g. the written vernacular being a trait of a nation, or patriotism naming attachment to an existing state entity); it was based on a largely objective terminological research; it expanded the Marxist idea of historical power play and social dynamics, which does have an initial appearance of being true. (For example, it asserted that in continental Europe it was "actually" the economy that has divided people into nations, after the fall of the empires; that linguistic unification always followed political unification, or that "actually" the state produces the nation and not vice-versa, the political bonds always being the driving force in "nation-building"). This latter work, John Breuilly's "Nationalism and the State" (1982), Ernest Gellner's "Nations and Nationalism" (1983) and Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities" (1983) represent the dominant but increasingly challenged⁷ "modernist" view within nationalist studies. What this view basically asserts is the fact that nations emerged only in the 19th century and that nationalism is an instrument of power used by the elites (just like racism), an instrument owing much to religion, according to Hobsbawm.

Among the most recent approaches to nationalism, perhaps two stand out most. The first one is the Czech Marxist historian Miroslav Hroch's corpus of works (the latest addition being "European Nations: Explaining Their Formation", from 2015⁸). Much more moderate than Hobsbawm, he is one of the rare Marxists who do not consider a nation to be simply a cultural construct. To a certain degree, his comparative research of different historical instances of nation-formation can even be regarded as a sequel to Hastings' critique of the modernist view. One of the significant Hrochian concessions consists in the emphasis of the existence of a collective consciousness of the nation. The second notable approach consists in a survey of the immense (and increasing) number of theories about nationalism. It belongs to the Turkish scholar Umut Ozkirimli⁹, and it focuses on theories developed since 1960. Ozkirimli classifies them as primordialist ones (with which the present perspective does sympathise

⁷ For a relevant list of studies, cf. Hastings, *The construction of nationhood*, 8 seqq.

⁸ Miroslav Hroch, *European Nations: Explaining Their Formation* (New York: Verso, 2015).

⁹ Umut Özkirimli, *Contemporary Debates on Nationalism: A Critical Engagement* (Houndmills; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

but does not wholly embrace¹⁰), modernist ones derived from social theories, and ethno-symbolist ones (Anthony D. Smith etc.). He himself offers a new theory, centred on the claim that the essential element of nationalism is the rhetoric of “national interest”, a rhetoric which “constructs reality”¹¹. By way of an unexpected argumentative concourse, the current text also observes and analyses the latter element, with a big difference though: While Ozkirimli deems this element essential to nationalism (in general), the present argumentation assigns it to nationalism *qua ideology*, while claiming that the authentical sense of “nationalism” is another one, which the nationalist ideology only perverted.

Even more remarkable, from the viewpoint of this study, is a second existing critical stance against the concepts of nation and nationalism (besides the one vocal within nationalist studies). This criticism is raised by Orthodox theologians, both foreign and Romanian¹². For instance, Cyril Hovorun, also famed for his views on another recent topic, holds that “protonationalist” and (even “Orthodox”) “nationalists” typically *worship* either ethnic identity (for irenic, emancipatory or for violent, oppressive ends) or supra-ethnic “civilizations”¹³. His position and related ones consider nationalism to be “coherent with” ideology and confuse the true Life of the Orthodox Church with mundane Realpolitik. Such a move is also typical in Marxist texts. While opting for a more moderate tone in their ecclesiological study, Pantelis Kalaitzidis and Nikolaos Asproulis¹⁴ still regard nationalism basically as the endorsement of a “chosen” nation or race, which stands in opposition to the universality and ecumenicity of Christ’s Love. Focusing on the history of Orthodox peoples, Vasilios N. Makrides delivers a patient, balanced, lesser polemical- and more objective view of what he proves

¹⁰ Cf. Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations And States: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Nations and The Politics of Nationalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977).

¹¹ Özkirimli, *Contemporary Debates on Nationalism: A Critical Engagement*, 299.

¹² To name just one of the most recent Romanian contributions (one valuable also for reasons like including a brief survey of the myriad of works form the field of today’s nationalist studies), take the following succinct scrutiny of Nichifor Crainic’s life and work: Maxim Morariu, *The “Christian Nationalism” of Nichifor Crainic Reflected in His Work from the 4th Decade of the 20th Century* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2020), <http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/bd/ebooks/pdf/2659.pdf>. Although formulated in a way one could call rather wanting, the text correctly indicates the historical sense in which “nationalism” stood for a messianic ideology which at times even tried to create a „secular religion” (p. 42). Unfortunately, what it fails to notice is that nationalism is not reducible to this concept. The present text will contradict Morariu’s assertion of a „total contradiction between «nationalism» and «Christianity»” (ibid.).

¹³ Cyril Hovorun, ‘Nation-Building Versus Nationalism: Difficult Dilemmas for the Church’, *FIJISR Icoana Credintei* 6, no. 11 (2020): 5–16.

¹⁴ Cf. Pantelis Kalaitzidis and Nikolaos Asproulis, ‘Greek Religious Nationalism and the Challenges of Evangelization, Forgiveness and Reconciliation’, in *Just Peace: Orthodox Perspectives* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012), 68–89.

to be the endogenous tendency of the local Orthodox Churches to identify themselves “with the respective nations and concomitant national ideologies”¹⁵. According to him, nationalization (detached from chauvinism and other sorts of extremism) “should be rather regarded as normal, namely as the modern continuation of various pre-national Orthodox traditions”¹⁶. Still more striking is another statement from his concluding remarks – “nationalism [...] is neither a virus nor a heresy”¹⁷. In its basic form, this is a thesis also found in the present article (see part 2.2. below for its expansion). But in Makrides’ context what is actually meant is a fatal development, much the same as today’s globalist turn – a historical process which calls for an (unspecified) adaptation from the part of the Church. So despite his concessions, Makrides still considers nationalism to be an ideology, which sometimes came in tolerable forms. From the viewpoint of the text at hand, when nationalism is considered as an ideology, its staunch criticism, like the one of Kalaitzidis and Asproulis is more justified. The problem lies elsewhere: Even if all of the last three authors are right in pointing out that all our natural characteristics are “relativized” and transcended in the perspective of faith and salvation, as stated by Saint Paul¹⁸, they do not clarify the way in which this *sublation* (cf. part 2.1.), this transfiguring surpassing is to be understood. This and all other shortcomings mentioned during this outline of the existing research will be addressed in the present contribution, in a rather surprisingly simple way.

But is an Orthodox Christian stance different from the mentioned ones even *conceivable*? Can the very possibility be imagined that these authors have missed an essential element? Isn’t the christian *kerygma*, by definition anti-nationalist? Isn’t Christianity supposed to give birth to a “new human” (Cf. Ephesians 2, 15; 4, 22-24) whose old bonds are “loosed” (Ps 116, 16)? As a final introduction to the present study, please consider the following conclusion of a certain analysis:

“The christians have no country. One cannot take from them what they have not. Since Christendom must [...] constitute itself as a nation, it is itself national, though not in the old sense of the word.”

¹⁵ V.N Makrides, ‘Why Are Orthodox Churches Particularly Prone to Nationalization and Even to Nationalism?’, *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*. 57, no. 3/4 (2013): 325-52. The current quote is from page 327.

¹⁶ Makrides, ‘Why Are Orthodox...’, 349.

¹⁷ Makrides, ‘Why Are Orthodox...’, 351.

¹⁸ Kalaitzidis and Asproulis, ‘Greek Religious Nationalism...’, 71; Makrides, ‘Why Are Orthodox Churches...’, 327.

Its exact source is still irrelevant at this stage of the reflection. Taken to imply that the christians do not have an *earthly* Jerusalem (cf. “πατριδα”, Hebrews 11), and that their new “nation” is the Church, the point seems indeed correct. Because it oddly chooses proscribed words to describe the Church as the new people, it could be taken as a (pretty rough and dashing) missiological strategy for approaching the nationalists. But is its message really correct? Perhaps judgement can be easier passed when considering the way the quoted conclusion is being arrived at, which is the following:

“[...] the Church alone is really non-ideological. [...] The life-conditions of the old society are already destroyed within the life-conditions of the neophytes. The neophyte is without property; his relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with the old family relation; [...his life] has stripped him of every trace of national character. Law, morality, religion, are to him so many old prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many old interests. [...] Christendom, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata, which make up the official society, being blown up. Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of Christendom with the old domination is a national struggle, at first. The Church of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own old domination [...] up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the old domination lays the foundation for the domination of the Church.”

As one surely notices at least now, not only is this not a Christian text, but it is actually a modified version of the Communist Manifesto, describing criminal ideological principles. In these two quoted fragments, the words “workers” and “proletariat” were substituted by “Church”, “christians”, “neophytes” or “Christendom”, depending on context, “bourgeois” was replaced by “old” or “old domination” and “the revolutionary class” by “non-ideological”. No other modifications were made and the translation was made in strict accord with the original¹⁹. Leaving aside the convincing indictment that Marxism entails

¹⁹ This is a personal translation. (No faithful English translation of these paragraphs could be identified.) The original text has been consulted in accordance with following reproduction and transcription: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest Der Kommunistischen Partei*, ed. Deutsches Textarchiv Team, Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1. Auflage (London: Office der „Bildungs-Gesellschaft für Arbeiter“ von I. E. Burghard, 1848), http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/marx_manifestws_1848 . The first fragment is quoted from page 14: “Die Arbeiter haben kein Vaterland. Man kann ihnen nicht nehmen, was sie nicht haben. Indem das Proletariat [...] sich selbst als Nation konstituieren muß, ist es selbst noch national, wenn auch keineswegs im Sinne der Bourgeoisie.”. The second fragment

perverted Christian motifs, the truth is that all of these thoughts represent – to their core, i.e. structurally, syntactically even – nothing but a turn-over of the christian *kerygma* and a blasphemy. No similarity can exist between Marxism and the Christianity it must *annihilate* (something literally stated by Gramsci²⁰, for example) – neither relating to family, nor relating to nation, nor to anything else. This should be a starting point whenever theologically approaching these topics. In fact, one *can* take away from many Christians their identity, their social dignity, as well as the biological lives and the mundane future of their beloved, *in this world*, by means of brainwashing, but also by other violent means. But can the fifth commandment cease to apply *in this world*? Can the teaching about Gods *logoi* permeating all cultures be annulled? Such truths and norms have no “expiration date”. As for blowing things up, “all who draw the sword will die by the sword” (Matthew 26, 52). The only real Revolution which existed in history and which made straight the paths for the Lord has been brought about by Christ Himself. The only true statement obtained within the text above after the substitutions is given in the most modified sentence: Indeed, only the essential Church, only true christian faith is non-ideological. *All ideology is the opposite of religion and also the opposite of true religion – of Christianity.*

From the Christian point of view, the present article will argue that nationalism should be understood as a form of *love*, which – like all forms of love – is easily corruptible. The positions that ascribe a nationalistic view of the

is quoted from pages 9 to 10: “[...] nur das Proletariat [ist] eine wirklich revolutionäre Klasse. [...] Die Lebensbedingungen der alten Gesellschaft sind schon vernichtet in den Lebensbedingungen des Proletariats. Der Proletarier ist eigenthumslos; sein Verhältniß zu Weib und Kindern hat nichts mehr gemein mit dem bürgerlichen Familienverhältniß; die moderne industrielle Arbeit, die moderne Unterjochung unter das Kapital [...] hat ihm allen nationalen Charakter abgestreift. Die Gesetze, die Moral, die Religion sind für ihn eben so viele bürgerliche Vorurtheile, hinter denen sich eben so viele bürgerliche Interessen verstecken. [...] Das Proletariat, die unterste Schichte der jetzigen Gesellschaft, kann sich nicht erheben, nicht aufrichten, ohne daß der ganze Ueberbau der Schichten, die die offizielle Gesellschaft bilden, in die Luft gesprengt wird. Obgleich nicht dem Inhalt, ist der Form nach der Kampf des Proletariats gegen die Bourgeoisie zunächst ein nationaler. Das Proletariat eines jeden Landes muß natürlich zuerst mit seiner eigenen Bourgeoisie fertig werden [...] bis zu dem Punkt, wo er [der mehr oder minder versteckte Bürgerkrieg] in eine offene Revolution ausbricht und durch den gewaltsamen Sturz der Bourgeoisie das Proletariat seine Herrschaft begründet”.

²⁰ “[Communism was] the religion that was supposed to kill Christianity. Religion in the sense that it too is a faith, which has its martyrs and its practices; religion because it has replaced in the consciences of the transcendental God of Catholics the trust in Man and in his best energies as the only spiritual reality”. Personal translation of the original: “[Il comunismo era] la religione che doveva ammazzare il cristianesimo. Religione nel senso che anch'esso è una fede, che ha i suoi martiri e i suoi pratici; religione perché ha sostituito nelle coscienze al Dio trascendentale dei cattolici la fiducia nell'uomo e nelle sue energie migliori come unica realtà spirituale” Antonio Gramsci, *Sotto la Mole (1916-1920)* (Torino: Einaudi, 1960), 228.

faith to the autocephalous Church are based on the premise that its “emancipation” was triggered by religious nationalism²¹. This is a non-evident generalisation which ought not be accepted as a premise. Actually, the system of autocephalies was established by the Church as a whole²². When assessing such matters, what primarily counts is the principle, not (eventual flaws of) the implementation. As it will be argued, two necessary distinctions should correct this fallacious premise. Their exposition will clarify the structure of this study and, in the end, the employed methodology.

The two distinctions referred to also structure the whole article: The first of them differentiates between two main meanings of the homonymous term “nationalism” – between nationalism qua ideology (which comes in four types), and nationalism as “love for one’s nation”. In part 1, a concept-analysis and a contrast with “patriotism” will prove the general legitimacy of the second meaning of “nationalism”. The second distinction to be made is the one between the (self-evident) Christian impeachment of chauvinism and hate, on one side, and the official impeachment of ethnophyletism (1872), on the other side. This topic will be discussed in part 2, which turns towards ecclesiology and social theology, and assesses the relationship between hate and phyletism. Finally, part 3 ascertains the proper sense of universalism, valid for any cultural context. It briefly explores (or rather indicates) features of the Romanian universalism and it uses them to outline the meaning of (national) tradition(s). (Needless to say, no relation whatsoever exists between the use of “universalism” in such contexts and the errant *apokatastasis*-doctrine, which is improperly named in this way.) The issue of assuming one’s national identity is investigated in a last step, in order to arrive at what the Church calls “the dignity of a nation” as a form of communion, endorsed even by Christ Himself. Nationalism in the sense advocated here is precisely this endorsement.

These main steps of the argument are often linked by answers given to adjacent questions. Part 2, for example, starts with an effort to clarify what “national” meant for the Church in the first stage of its history and with addressing the further question if (and through which means) the Church could still assist society today, so that grave ideological slides could be avoided.

²¹ Cf. Cyril Hovorun, ‘Nation-Building...’, 10. According to Hovorun, Orthodox autocephaly is the result of the “nationalization” of religion. However, unlike what he believes, those persons who today confuse being Orthodox with being Serb, Bulgarian or Russian are in general not the Orthodox faithful. For instance, the large majority of those Germans who did hear about the Orthodox Church, when being informed that someone is Orthodox will always ask “Russian Orthodox or which other kind?”. It is mainly the West that holds that the Orthodox Church has been split, while the Orthodox faithful usually have the consciousness of belonging to the One Church, at all times.

²² Cf. Makrides, ‘Why Are Orthodox Churches...’, 336.

A final third subsidiary question answered there is if Christianity should be considered “valuable” because of being an alleged anticipation of modernism (as the neocons claim), or even of postmodern individualism and tolerance²³. The three answers given in (and around) part 2.1. represent an intermediary step between introducing the second meaning of “nationalism” at the end of part 1 (in a context dominated by the issue of politics and ideology), on the one hand, and the love-hate pair and the conciliar impeachment of ethnophyletism in the 19th century, on the other hand. One last underlying aspect also remains only implicit in part 2: The sense of “universality” discussed there (“universal” as opposed to “individual”) is still a superficial one. The aspect of universality becomes explicit only in part 3, which also gives its proper sense. In the course of part 2, merely its superficial sense is present – even if the contexts do already touch upon the aspect of the Church being καθολικός (universal). However, just like the latter attribute does not primarily point towards the entirety of peoples to be included in the Church, but to the wholeness (κατά, “down[wards]” and ὅλου, genitive of “whole”) of the (undistorted) Teaching, so too intrinsically, the proper sense of “universal” (the one valid for any cultural context) does not just point to the opposing term “individual”. It points to the spiritual level present in the (national) cultural traditions, which is *both* common to- and transcendent of- any of its manifestations. This is the reason why it is possible to dogmatically demonstrate and to liturgically confirm that the (non-ideological) concept of a *national culture* does not contradict the universalist claims of the Church. If the later goal has been achieved in this article, or if further reflection still needs to be undertaken, remains to be seen.

As it can be derived from the latter observations, the employed methodology will mainly be the one of *Orthodox Church Dogmatics*. In other words, the relation between the Church and nationalism will be seen “from above”; deduced conclusions will be measured against realities on the ground. The methodology used in understanding historical stances will follow the “principle of charity” and the Gadamerian “fusion of horizons”. These will be used in approaching facts and historical perspectives on nationalism stemming from antiquity, Romanian middle ages, 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, of both secular and ecclesial nature, as well as in approaching the selected Romanian authors. Primarily four of them have been chosen in order to substantiate the view presented here – Mihai Eminescu, Dumnitru Stăniloae, Daniil Sandu Tudor, Mircea Vulcănescu²⁴.

²³ If classical modernity only cared about freedom (one that lead to the tens of thousands of guillotined frenchmen) and if the totalitarian modernity only cared about equality, postmodernism radicalizes both concepts, promoting an anarchist “correctness” and anti-elitism.

²⁴ Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889) studied philosophy and law in Vienna and Berlin and was employed upon his return as editor and journalist. He is the Romanian *national poet*, a title

1. The two meanings of nationalism

Ideologies are alive, in the same manner as languages are – but only ideologies shape languages. Languages don't shape ideologies. Nevertheless, they last longer, hopefully. Taken in the order of today's common sense, the first (and often only) meaning of nationalism is the ideology. What this article will endeavour to show is that the ideology named "nationalism" has given a name to a much older phenomenon and has tried to replace it. The corresponding second meaning will be introduced by way of analysing the Romanian understanding of nationalism.

Until recently, western politics was constantly moving towards the left. The bias present in the unfair labelling of the right as the "far-" right and of the far right as "ultra-" right was hardly felt at all. The public censorship of terms associated with a "conservative" stance extended in some places even to words like "mother" and "father". No wonder it seems impossible (at least in Europe) that "nationalism" could ever escape the stereotypical association with nazism and, generally, with *evil*. Nevertheless, nationalism still is occasionally recognised as being of two kinds – one linking nationality to *ius soli*, the other to *ius sanguinis*. However, things are complicated, indeed. Just like the laws of all contemporary states exhibit a mixture of these two, so does any form of nationalism. But as a rule, any form of nationalism "sold" to the public through politics is ideological and people should be aware of this.

In actual geopolitics one can generally count about four types of nationalist ideological stances, today. The most impressive one is called "exceptionalism". What it means is actually a sort of patriotism which reunites the right- and

assigned to him 1941 by George Călinescu (the greatest Romanian literary historian) in his *History of Romanian Literature* (cf. pages 371–402, where it is also stated that "while being highly Romanian, Eminescu is a great universal poet"). Nicolae Iorga, the most famous Romanian historian, called Eminescu "the full expression of the Romanian soul" (*Istoria literaturii române*, 1929, 167) and one of the Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica's books is entitled *Eminescu or thoughts about the complete man of the Romanian culture* (1975). The fact that because of its difficult translation Eminescu's oeuvre cannot reach an international audience is not something that affects his universalism, for reasons to be exposed in this article. Fr. Dumnitru Stăniloae (1903-1993) is best known for his *Dogmatic Orthodox Theology* (1978), for his work at the first Romanian translation of the *Philokalia* and for various commentaries on Church Fathers. Daniil Sandu Tudor (1896-1962) was a Romanian journalist and poet who became a monk. One of the victims of communist torture, he died at Aiud prison after being accused of high treason and crimes against the working class and the "revolution", for having organized the *Burning Bush* meetings. Mircea Vulcănescu (1904-1952), Romanian sociologist, economist and philosopher was also a public servant (1935-1940) and an official at the Ministry of Finance (1941-1944). He was condemned in a Stalinist-style trial for activities against the Soviet Union and he died as a martyr, also at Aiud prison.

left-wing descendants of U.S.-liberalism²⁵. The second kind of nationalism seems to be the one vocal in states as dissimilar as Iran, China, India, Russia, Bolivia, Venezuela, former Libya, Syria and so on. This kind can generally be considered as the enduring attempt to challenge the dominance of the U.S. and to strive for sovereignty, autonomy or even for local and regional influence. This is arguably the type of nationalism Hungary, Czechia, Poland, Italy and even Britain have been recently attracted to, faced with the pressure of Bruxelles. This type is also an ideological kind because it is promoted and modelled by the political class, but this does not necessarily signify that it does not represent justified worries and aspirations of the people, to a fair level. The third type of nationalism is the intolerant one, advocated by all fundamentalist right parties. At state level, it is present in countries like Turkey, Saudi Arabia and, still increasingly, in Ukraine. How well these examples fit the model is certainly a matter open for debate.

²⁵ In *Realpolitik*, both of these descendants – neoconservatism and neoliberalism – “defend” the national U.S.-interest “globally”, in an almost identical manner. (Admittedly, the 2017-2020 U.S. government was the first one since many decades not to initiate any new war.) Generally, the two follow the post-westphalian “humanitarian war” doctrine and the economic shock-doctrine, the latter usually through the structural adjustments prescribed by the I.M.F. and by the World Bank. At home, both defend the blending of the corporate power and the power of the (deep-)state. (Such corporations belong to Big Tech, to the military-industrial complex etc. While the neoconservatives do all of this usually straightforward, openly calling for protectionism and interventionism, arms race, full spectrum dominance and the right of a pre-emptive strike, the progressives tacitly continue the same policies, while also pretending to care about the distribution of income. In their narrative, this distribution is efficiently taken care by an entity called “the free market”. The prophets of laissez-faire capitalism, like Milton Friedman, bear witness to this entity’s ability to make the world a better place, once unleashed. This means privatising as much as possible – land, water, healthcare, infrastructure etc. This neoliberal stance encourages the world to “liberate” the capital from government regulations and constraints, claiming that economic freedom leads to political freedom. Meanwhile, it functions as the perfect cover for the accumulation of capital by the elites at the top of multinational corporations and it considers state interventions a threat to freedom because it would mean upholding collective decisions to the disadvantage of the individual ones (of the elites). In our neoliberal world, corporations regularly challenge health and environmental regulations qua “trade barriers” through the system of investor-state dispute settlement (within special courts, which are not bound to disclose the negotiations). They have all the resources to launch economic wars against those states which defend their own sovereignty against intrusive corporate politics. Those states in which neoliberal recommendations are not embraced and the demands of the american corporations are being refused, are either sanctioned or intervened into, with the stated reason of “restoring” or “establishing” “democracy”. The bellicose rhetoric and the start of the interventions often belong to the neoconservatives, because their electorate doesn’t need cosmeticized reasons, but the democrats follow the same direction (cf. Libya, Syria). In the end, bipartisan intentions are satisfied. The only real political disagreement in the U.S. is caused by the neoconservative rejection of abortion, of immigration and, to some extent, of gender-ideology.

Finally, a paradoxical fourth kind encourages *hating* everything which falls under the banner of nationalism of any sort, along with the nations in which it persists, and even deems it “relativist” for allegedly existing only by resenting others²⁶. This fourth kind presents itself in great contrast to nationalism and brands itself enlightened “patriotism”. It supports maintaining the status quo of the borderlines (for reasons constantly diminishing in strength, because it increasingly regards borders as having been randomly established by an act of raw power). It also regards the nation not to be determined by the majority (even though it asserts its enriching individuality internationally). Consequently, to reject nationalism is a patriotic duty:

“Car le patriotisme est l’exact contraire du nationalisme.
Le nationalisme en est la trahison.”
(Emmanuel Macron, 11.10.2018, Paris)

By permanently contrasting their ideology to nationalism, patriots can easily be seduced by populist demagogic techniques of declaring one’s distinctiveness to be one’s moral superiority, empathy, inclusiveness. In such cases, they won’t miss a chance to pronounce the intolerance of slogans like “national interests first”:

“En disant «nos intérêts d’abord et qu’importent les autres !», on gomme ce qu’une Nation a de plus précieux, ce qui la fait vivre [...]: ses valeurs morales.”
(Emmanuel Macron, 11.10.2018, Paris)

Patriotism cherishes only “today’s” universal values (although it is yet unclear what forum establishes them) and it judges the state of the society in terms of its consent to them. It never regards society as something already constituted, but as a perpetual project. Otherwise, the people could not allegedly avoid succumbing to *collective egoism* – not only with regard to resources, but also to culture. Thus, culture is just the sum total of encounters between populations and it must only be understood in its “*universal*”, i.e. “*diverse*”, *sense*:

“Il n’y a pas de culture Française, Il n’y a pas une culture française, il y a une culture en France et elle est diverse.”
(Emmanuel Macaron, 05.02.20187, Lyon)

²⁶ Cf. Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, v4.1_r2ep (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017), 62, seqq. (chapter “Be a patriot”).

The message coming from this sort of patriotism seems to be that there exists only one kind of bad diversity – the one that includes opinions divergent from its own.

But historically, this patriotic antagonist stance towards “nationalism” did not exist from the beginning and did not exist everywhere. In Romania, the belief that “patriotism” was synonymous with “nationalism” was occasionally voiced as soon as the influence of the French enlightenment started to be felt, and it endured as far as 1939. The “Dictionary of Romanian Language” of that year gives the following definitions:

1939 (DLR)²⁷: “nationalism noun. The character of loving your own nation, patriotism.

[...] **nation**, noun. People, the total number of people of the same blood, settled on a determined territory as a basis of their existence, who have the same language (which they formed), the same present interests and the same aspirations; whose organism constitutes the same power (nationality), which creates human culture, which is nothing but its varied product”.

Needless to say, with the advances in science, in civil rights and in conscience, ideological statements like the one that the nation is formed of those who “have the same blood” have been proven as wrong as inadmissible. But this Romanian view regarding the synonymy of “patriotism” and “nationalism” only additionally justifies the labelling of patriotism as the fourth type of nationalism qua ideology. Nationalism as ideology has been bred by the doctrines of Herder and Fichte up to Renan, Maurras and the ideologists of the 20th century. Here lies the root of the US’ attitude – the idea of using military campaigns to spread enlightenment and democracy. And here lay the roots of nazi imperialism – the ideas of revenge and of race. The nationalist ideology exists even in a patriotic form: Patriotism, depending on the sort, may declare the interests of a confederation greater than those of a component nation, or it may start wars to defend the “foreign interests” of such a confederation in other places of the world, like in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria or Venezuela. The ideology of nationalism often also resorted to abstruse lies: In the time of the domination of the great empires, it often promoted the creation of national

²⁷ “1939 in lassy occurs the publishing of the Dictionary of the Romanian Language (Etymologies, meanings, examples, citations, archaisms, neologisms, provincialisms) by August Scriban, 36 years after the work begun and over a decade and a half since the initial compilation was finished.” (Gabriela Haja, Academia Română, and Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide” (Bucharest), *Dictionarul limbii române (DLR): în format electronic. Studii privind achiziționarea* (Iasi: Alfa, 2005), 13).

states by recurring to phantasmagorias, in order to give enough “restoration”-impulses (as was also the case with the ideal of reestablishing a “Greek empire” which never existed).

However, there *is* a sense according to which the conflation of nationalism and patriotism is incorrect, albeit not one compatible with Macron’s beliefs: It is given by the second meaning of “nationalism” which does also exist, and has always existed, in one form or another. It is the sound underlying substratum parasitized by the nationalist ideology. On this basal level, “nationalism” stands for nothing else, actually, than the love towards the nation, etymologically stemming from the latin for “being born” – “natio”.

Yes, the perversion of nationalism into idolatry (the idolatry of deeming one’s nation as *absolute* or *better*) is an unfortunate *possibility* indeed – but it is in no way a *necessity*. The natural, honest and reasonable impulse towards unity which can, but must not lead to perversion, is a form of love. The peril of a negative outcome must be engaged in an ascetic manner, something “highly likely” only Christian morals are capable of, owing to the ontological implications of Christology.

The pre-Christian status-quo is described by Plato by depicting the “logic” of holding “that the Hellenic race is friendly to itself and akin, and foreign and alien to the barbarian” (Πολιτεία, 470c²⁸). (What a clear example of ancient “ideological” nationalism, not to mention the hebrew one...) In this pre-Christian view, “war is the fit name” for the “enmity and hatred” of “enemies by nature”. But the same Plato shows that even this negative ancient definition of nationalistic love was grounded upon the positive one: “Greeks, however [...] are still by nature the friends of Greeks [even] when they act in this [belligerent] way, but [we shall say] that Greece is sick in that case and divided by faction” (Πολιτεία, 470c). The greeks, writes Plato, are by nature “philhellenes” (Πολιτεία, 470e).

Thus the second meaning of nationalism is the love for the greater *family*, while patriotism is the love for a home-*country*. The preeminence of the physical-geographical sense of the root πατρίς (Romanian: “patrie”) is confirmed by the lexicography. Countries encompass *material* wealth. They are governed by the power of the state. Christians must fulfil their material duties towards the state, to be in the position to demand allowance for the Church to offer God that which is “God’s” (Matthew 22:21) – the divine service and our whole lives. But the Church is not dedicated to the states. The Church is dedicated to the *nations*, and *the primary nature of the latter is spiritual*, because they are build by humans and humans share this trait.

²⁸ Cf. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey, Perseus Digital Library Project (London; Cambridge [Mass.]: W. Heinemann; Harvard University Press, 1969), <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D5%3Asection%3D470c>.

2. How should the Church address national identity and offer guidance to the society?

The short answer to this question should be the following: Just as it has done historically (and canonically) and how it tries to, today – that is, *neither giving in to the seduction of right-wing extremism, nor incriminating the love for one's nation*. This section represents a longer answer to the same question. Everything comes down to the just distinction between love and hate.

In the case of the holy Canons of the Church, the term “nation” meant “metropolitan province”²⁹. In this sense, although the expression “national councils” was used even before the organization of the Roman Empire in provinces, it admittedly had a rather geographical sense. E.g., the 34th apostolic Canon (which establishes the principle of episcopal collegiality) requests that the local bishop, who identifies himself with the “nation” of that respective region acknowledges his superior. Territories are more important to the Church in times in which populations come and go, indeed: Canon Law demands the *de iure* preservation of a certain administrative jurisdiction even if all the parishioners and even the hierarch happen to be forced out of it by the historical adversities (e.g. 39 Trulan). However, what the logic of the Church referred to, even in these terms, were *frameworks for the administration of the existing human realities* on the ground – and *not of the existing material patrimony*. Secondly, that any ecclesiastic organization is definitely *also* regulated by the ethnic criterion is a proven fact as well: When Canon 28 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council stated that the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate extends over the (nations of) “barbarians”³⁰, it did not refer to a *geographical* “nation”. Yes, Gospel indigenization involves no more than national missions. But through these missions, which christianised certain peoples, *national churches* were established wherever migratory tribes settled. Even earlier, national churches began to evolve after the indigenization of the Gospel among the Armenians

²⁹ The Ecumenical Patriarchate, ‘Territorial Jurisdiction According to Orthodox Canon Law. The Phenomenon of Ethnophyletism in Recent Years’, The Ecumenical Patriarchate - Theological and Other Studies, 2001, <https://www.patriarchate.org/-/territorial-jurisdiction-according-to-orthodox-canon-law-the-phenomenon-of-ethnophyletism-in-recent-yea-1>.

³⁰ “The adjective «barbarian» defines the noun «nations», which is omitted from the text of the canon, but which is to be inferred, as Zonaras interprets it. Barbarian nations or countries are, as has been said, those provinces which lay beyond the Roman Empire at the time of the 4th Ecumenical Synod: «While it called bishoprics of the barbarians those of Alania, Russia and others». The other barbarian lands, apart from Alania and Russia, are, in general, «the Barbarians», according to the interpretation of Aristenos of Canon 28: «... the (bishops) of Pontus and Thrace and Asia, as well as the Barbarians, are consecrated by the Patriarch of Constantinople...»” The Ecumenical Patriarchate, “Territorial Jurisdiction According to Orthodox Canon Law. The Phenomenon of Ethnophyletism in Recent Years”.

and the Georgians³¹. Saints Cyril and Methodius became the Apostles of the Slavs. They set an absolute example for the missionary acculturation, followed thereafter e.g. by Saint Olaf.

Father Dumitru Stăniloae has written a brief but dense historical account of how the ethno-cultural criterion has been applied in some monasteries since the very beginning of cenobitic life. Its application led to the evolution of the tradition of officiating the Liturgy in two or more languages in parallel, in the same community but in different churches³² (something unimaginable in today's Athos). By giving approval for worship to take place in national languages from the beginning and by afterwards establishing the system of autocephalies, the One Church did always support the affirmation of nations. Father Stăniloae named this feature "the poly-national universality of Orthodoxy"³³. That which became the main weakness in the West after the Great Schism, was a strength during the times of the greatest closeness of the One Church to ideal unity: It was *variety*.

In the Gospel of John, chapter 4, Jesus Christ passes over the physical border between Jews and Samaritans and over the spiritual border (customs). However, He Who has the fulness of "a complete man" (Ephesians 4, 13) still utters His commitment to His national identity in the clearest possible way, proving that it essentially pertains to human nature: "You [Samaritans] worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews." (John 4, 22).

Does this mean that the ladder of love ends with the love for the nation? Obviously, no conclusion could be more fallacious.

2.1. The problem of love

As a contemporary author puts it, "since the nation is defined by its inherent virtue rather than by its future potential, politics becomes a discussion of good and evil rather than a discussion of possible solutions"³⁴. Yes, for the Church politics *is* the discussion of good and evil. And yes, the Church does not (and should not) give concrete political solutions. At the same time, given today's reality, the Church cannot view the world other than it is – and the world is comparable with a plant nursery, where instead of plants problems are propagated and grown, ready to be supplied to- and thrive in any person. So if "political life" is defined as "public life of the πόλις (city, state)", the nature

³¹ Cf. Makrides, 'Why Are Orthodox Churches...'; 339-340.

³² Dumitru Stăniloae, "Universalitatea și etnicitatea Bisericii în concepția ortodoxă", *Studii teologice*, no. 2 (1977), p 143, seqq.

³³ Stăniloae, "Universalitatea", 147.

³⁴ Snyder, *On Tyranny*, 67 (chapter "Epilogue").

of the Church is inherently *political* (social-spiritual). There cannot exist any sort of neutrality inside the Church. If, on a personal level, “political neutrality” means the approval of the leading power, on a state-level “religious neutrality” ultimately means the exclusion and oppression of all morals. The only state-related mission of the Church is to give warnings (and not to come up with historical solutions, something which is the task of the governments). The primary mission of the Church (i.e. of each of its members) is that Love which is always ready for a self-sacrifice in favour of the Truth, i.e. of Christ. The Church has to defend everything that participates in Him – persons and truths alike, e.g. the truth that any future potential is determined by inherent virtue. For this reason, the way it can offer guidance is foremost by remaining upright and not negotiating Dogma and Liturgy.

Today it may be common to think that Christianity opened the path to modern universalist individualism. According to this (unreflected) perspective, the first major positive contribution brought by Christianity was declaring everyone equal in the eyes of God. Then, in the very same “moment” in which truth has been “christianly” set in the process of becoming established by the (augustinian) “inward” turn, the protestant spirit of capitalism (and enlightenment itself) has shifted only a stone’s throw away. Hence, as soon as Christianity was born, the chain of liberation has been allegedly inescapable – the liberation from God and the drift towards science, then the one from monarchies to national republics, and finally from national republics to transnational corporations.

After all, doesn’t the ultimate level lie beyond the nations, even for the Church? It does, but is the ultimate level in question the one of the brave de-symbolised consumerist society which belongs (just like everything else – “ideas”, “policies” etc.) to the “free market”? To put it short, the answer is no. Neither Christ nor the historical Church in its human, institutional dimension opened this path. From the point of view of the Church, man is not an individual, but a person – body and soul. The many parts of the “one body” are hierarchical, not “equal” (cf. 1 Corinthians 12, 27-30). But certainly, from the very first centuries on, the Holy Fathers of the Church insisted that God is not concerned only with the one who lives in God and has attained the knowledge of God. Instead, in the words of late Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, God is also concerned “with those who are far below”, so He sends the saint to lift them up – “to turn to those who are standing on the lower steps, to teach them what he has discovered [...] in their language”³⁵. The best general rendering of the same content can be found in the words of the Saviour: “The first [commandment] is this: «Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God

³⁵ Anthony Bloom, ‘11 Lectures on Dogmas’, Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh Archive - Texts - Series of Talks, 1959-1960, <http://masarchive.org/Sites/texts/1959-00-00-1-E-E-C-EM03-019ChurchDogmas.html>, (Dogmes I).

with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.» The second is this: «Love your neighbour as yourself.» No other commandment is greater than these.” (Mark 12, 29-31).

Such “neighbours” are successively encountered by a Christian during the human life-span: one’s mother, one’s father, one’s family, one’s community (including any man on the street), one’s nation, the communities of other ethnicities and traditions living alongside, the people of other nations abroad. (This is not so much a temporal succession as a general hierarchy.) Stepping into the adulthood of one’s conscience, the final stages of this ladder are reached – the One Church and, by God’s Will, the presence of He Who is holding the ladder. The ultimate “level” is the *ἐπέκτασις*, the eternal movement towards the eternal Foundation and Head of the Church.

To this day, this very same line of thinking is well alive in Romanian theology:

“Your neighbour and your fellow are real only if they start from the family, relatives, neighbours, street, village, city, region and country. If you don’t love these first, you don’t love the world or humanity or man kind [...]. We don’t go from the general humanity to the concrete man, but from the concrete person close to us we come to the idea of general humanity [...].”³⁶.

The reason why one cannot love the people from the other side of the world without loving one’s closer neighbour is that “human beings are not abstract unities, shorn from any determinations and, therefore, entirely identical.”³⁷ *Love is not abstract*. If one does not learn to love one’s very neighbour, one neither learns to properly love oneself, nor any other human.

The hierarchy of love, the symphony of its sublated³⁸ steps are eschatologically crucial. In the hierarchy of love, *the level of the nation proves*

³⁶ George Remete, *Leacuri Contra Evlaviei* (București: Paideia, 2018), 143.

³⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ortodoxie și românism*, ed. Constantin Schifirneț (București: Albatros, 1998 [1939]), 1. All quotations from Romanian sources have been translated by the author of this article, responsible for eventual mistakes.

³⁸ This article’s descriptions of the processes of surpassing a natural characteristic (e.g. parental love) while embracing the gift of a supernatural one (e.g. christian love), and even the descriptions of the qualitative “ascension” within the same general kind of love (natural love for family, natural love for the neighbours of one’s family), the hegelian concept of *sublation* will be used. What the English verb “to sublimate” translates is Hegel’s technical term “aufheben”. It means both to negate and to preserve, in one single act, at the same time: When an old form is being sublated, its corresponding content remains the same, on one hand, but is transformed through the process of reshaping. It gains a new life. Sublation can be thought as a refreshment, but one which transfers the entity into a radically new state, in which it both *is* and *isn’t* the old one.

to be (not a transient phenomenon, but) *a reality that will exist until the last day*. In Father Stăniloae's words,

"God did not create the world and the people in their variety with the purpose to destroy this variety in the end, for this would mean to destroy what He created, but He intended to lead creation in its variety to its completion, hence to its unification in God. In the Revelation it is said that «the nations will walk by the light of the lamb» (Rev 21:24). «And the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into the city of the eternal kingdom» (Rev 21:26), meaning that they will bring in the forms in which they achieved human, christian, completion so that we will see in it the richness of the creative and perfecting imagination of God."³⁹.

"God will not reward me for the manner in which I knew how to break off from the natural community in which I was granted to live, but according to the manner in which I endorsed this communion with my Christian will and love"⁴⁰.

"God considers man not in isolation, but as a member of a bigger community, He looks at communities and through them He makes man part of grace and salvation. And since the most natural communities are nations, why couldn't we say that God's look falls straight on nations and only because individuals are part of nations, each of them feels God's look upon them."⁴¹

From the ecclesiological perspective, the level of the nation is likewise crucial, because the Orthodox and apostolic view of our Sobornost...

"combines the universal and eternal character of the Gospel with the variety of nations, beyond the tendencies of a superficial universalism of imperialist character which doesn't want to acknowledge this variety. [...] The local Church is the concrete manifestation of the universal Church in various cultural, ethnic and social environments [...]"⁴².

This is the sense in which *the Encyclical of the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church from Crete*, with its paragraph 15 *proposes the protection and strengthening of ethnic identity*.

³⁹ Stăniloae, "Universalitatea", 150.

⁴⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, "Creștinism și naționalism", *Națiune și Creștinism*, ed. Constantin Schifirneț (București: Elion, 2003), 119.

⁴¹ Stăniloae, "Creștinism și naționalism", 119.

⁴² Valer Bel, *Misiunea bisericii în lumea contemporană* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002), 63.

2.2. *The problem of hate*

If, on the one hand, many consider the Church to be the forerunner of modernism, in the manner mentioned above, on the other hand, some consider the Church to be playing into the hands of ideological nationalism. The ascription of a nationalistic view of the faith is based on the premise that the “emancipation” of the autocephalous Church was triggered by religious nationalism. To counter this idea, some in the Church tend to appeal to the ethnophyletism-impeachment of 1872, identifying it as the official Orthodox condemnation of chauvinism.

Such an appeal is highly questionable, for the following reasons: The canonical decisions taken in 1872 by the local Council of Constantinople elaborate precisely the above-mentioned provisions of the 34th apostolic Canon, in the context of the territorial principle. Consolidated by the 35th apostolic Canon, by Canon 8 of the First Ecumenical Council, by the 12th Canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council and by others, what the 34th apostolic Canon establishes is *the interdiction of overlapping episcopal jurisdictions*.

In each metropolis there can exist only a single episcopal throne. *Nothing else than the offence of this principle constitutes the infamous ecclesiological heresy of (ethno)phyletism:*

“Phyletism is [...] an ecclesiological heresy which says that the Church can be territorially organized on an ethnic, racial, or cultural basis so that within a given geographic territory, there can exist several Church jurisdictions, directing their pastoral care only to the members of specific ethnic groups.”⁴³

“[In 1872 the Church] condemned through the Council of Constantinople phyletism, that is the autocephaly provoked by ethnic rivalries which, by exaggerating the local peculiarities, splits the unity of the communion of the universal Church.”⁴⁴

In other words, according to the conciliar decision, ethnophyletist heretics are those who territorially organize the Church according to exclusivist cultural or ethnic criteria⁴⁵ – the ethno-cultural tribalists within the ecclesial administration.

⁴³ Stephane Bigham, ‘The 1872 Council of Constantinople and Phyletism’, 2012, <https://ocf.org/the-1872-council-of-constantinople-and-phyletism/> (emphasis: PM).

⁴⁴ Bel, *Misiunea Bisericii în lumea contemporană*, 63.

⁴⁵ “What generated this canonical incrimination was the problem of the overlapping the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople with that of an Exarch proposed by the Bulgarians, starting with 1870, during a time in which the Bulgarians had an important

Letting the exclusivism part aside, in this category would fall (as shocking as this may sound) not those who hate an ethnic community, but rather those who organise the Orthodox communities in the diaspora in such a way, that in the same place the Greek Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church each have their own bishop⁴⁶. It is the unresolved and absurd situation in which the Orthodox communities of the diaspora stand⁴⁷ (and the situations from Moldova, Estonia, Ukraine etc.) that really risks setting the scene for the malefic temptation of this heresy, not the chauvinists.

Again, hierarchical thought is crucial: Of the two, the *most* severe sin is heresy. Hate is certainly severe. Hate stands right next to heresy, being a terrible and inadmissible sin. Christ equates hate to the act of murder (Matthew 5:21-22). But heresy is that diabolical subversive form of spiritual murder which defines the tares (cf. Matthew 13:24-30) and the wolves which come in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15; cf. Acts 20:29-30; 2 Timothy 3:5). Christ "hates" such an act, e.g. "the deeds of the Nicolaitans" (Revelation 2:6). The relationship between Truth and heresy is best expressed by St. Paul's contrast "between the temple of God and idols" (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). Confronted with the false preaching of "the liar [...] who denies that Jesus is the Christ" (1 John 2,22), Saint John the Apostle defined the heretics as antichrists (1 John 2,18). The Church's incrimination of phyletism is not *identical* with the incrimination of

diaspora in Istanbul. The Bulgarian Church was declared schismatic. Many Orthodox churches missed out from this council, from the ranks of those whose autonomy had already been accepted, and some even refused to participate, because the Ecumenical Patriarchate catalysed Hellenization even outside the Greek territories. Not just the Napoleonian or the Ottoman occupation assured the success of the ideological nationalism, but also the dependency of many Orthodox nations on the Phanariotes and on the Patriarchate from Constantinople" PM (Cf. Stăniloae, "Universalitatea", p 143, ff.)

⁴⁶ "The Patriarch's condemnation of Phyletism is based only on his loyalty to the canonical and theological tradition of the Church, nothing more. As we have said above, we should heartily applaud him for having courageously maintained the faith in a moment of crisis. In 1922, however, fifty years later, the Patriarch of Constantinople, the successor of the Patriarch who condemned Phyletism in 1872, himself violated the organizational principle of the Church by establishing an ethnic, Greek jurisdiction for the Americas; there is no lack of irony here. By this action, Constantinople opened the flood gates to Phyletism so that nearly all the national autocephaly Churches created dioceses for «their own» in the Americas and in Western Europe." (Bigham, "The 1872 Council of Constantinople and Phyletism").

⁴⁷ "In the case of diaspora, the most rational approach would be for the Church to encourage the love for their own nations exclusively in the case of the persons whose expatriation is temporary. A country like Germany, for example, would need its own national Orthodox Church to welcome with arms wide open of all those who, by emigration, decided (themselves or by the decision of their parents) to become German." Paul Andrei Mucichescu, 'Identitate națională și eclesială', 123.

hate towards an ethnic community and xenophobia. The Church does not need to officially incriminate the sin of hate. Things are clear. God made “from one man” “all the nations” (Acts 17:26). *In Christ* “there is neither Jew nor Gentile” (Galatians 3:28).

Faith cannot be reduced to a national trait. That which one could call “Orthodox ethics” would be equally violated by the discrimination of nations as it is by the idolization of nations⁴⁸. The Church hasn’t felt the need to emit a canonical decree for either of these two sins. *The idolization of a nation, the perversion of the love for a nation through selfishness and arrogance is the definition of ideological nationalism*. It too amounts to a very grave sin: It distorts the hierarchy of love, attempting against the most superior one, which transcends and sublimates the loves of nations. The idolization of a nation is the collective sin against the Holy Spirit, The Divine Person that keeps the Church together. But for the Church this grave sin is also self-evident.

As it will gradually become clearer, the reasons why “healthy” forms of nationalism often turn into “un-healthy” ones are personal and psychological (whereby ψυχή should be understood in Orthodox Christian manner). There is no “special” way in which the Church can assist society so that such a process can be avoided, other than the ways recommended by the Holy Fathers – other than νῆψις, which means remaining watchful by not forgetting Who God is (cf. 1 Peter 5, 8).

So if the Church did not condemn hate or perverted love in 1872, other than implicitly, how can it have condemned natural love? The Church condemned the ecclesiological heresy of (ethno)phyletism, not ethno-philía.

3. (Romanian) Universalism

“Any collective conscience, as well as every human society in general, exists before and outside the individuals that form it in each moment of its history. It is true, this conscience, this Romanian society lives only through the passive or voluntary adhesion of those who give it. However, it does not depend on each individual or on a few of them. A nation is a superior spiritual achievement, a spiritual unity polarized around a vital original centre in which all those who believe they belong, [do] take

⁴⁸ The Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow 13-16 August 2000), “Church and society or the fundamentals of the social conception of the Russian Orthodox Church”, chapter II (“Church and nation”), subchapter 4, *Gândirea socială a Bisericii*, ed. Ioan Ică Jr and Germano Marani (Sibiu: Deisis, 2002).

part. [...] salvation does not come from siding with a national-socialist point of view or with another external point of view, manipulated by random will and called «Romanian».”⁴⁹

This lines, written shortly before World War II, belong to Father Daniil Teodorescu (Sandu Tudor), founder and supporter of the renowned *Burning Bush* spiritual collective, a kind of “philocalic university”⁵⁰. Imprisoned for two years while still a journalist (for what the monarchy considered to be radical leftist political views⁵¹), a few years later Father Daniil was martyred as a hieromonk in communist cellars, having been accused of sympathizing with the right. (Panait Istrati’s later life comes to mind here, but at least he had obvious political views, until he shook them of.) What Father Daniil did stand for – just like the whole Romanian intellectual elite gathered in the Burning Bush and later decimated by the communists – wasn’t any political party, but *the transcendent meaning of Tradition*⁵².

3.1. “National” and “nationalism” - from ideological interest to sympathetic consciousness

In the prewar period, Father Daniil observed that “nationalism” started to mean...

“the hate and the ostentatious, uninterrupted threat towards unfriendly neighbours, [the hate] with which we have to nurture the lightsome soul of the young. [...] *This nationalism is mediocre, supported by small and self-seeking souls*”⁵³.

⁴⁹ Sandu Tudor, “Spre o conștiință limpede românească”, *Credința: ziar independent de luptă politică și spirituală* An III, no. 207 (12 August 1934), *apud* Sandu Tudor and Marius Vasileanu, *Universalism românesc* (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2013), p 33-34.

⁵⁰ Among its members were luminaries from the fields of theology and various sciences, united in prayer: Fr. Ivan Culighin, Fr. Benedict Ghiuș, Fr. Sofian Boghiu, Alexandru Mironescu, Anton Dumitriu, Dumitru Stăniloae, Alexandru Elian, Virgil Căndea, Vasile Voiculescu, Paul Sterian, Ștefan Todirașcu, Paul Constantinescu, as well as many others remarkable personalities, like Fr. Bartolomeu Anania, Fr. Adrian Făgețeanu, Fr. Arsenie Papacioc, Olga Greceanu, Șerban Cioculescu, George Văsii etc.

⁵¹ Constantin Jinga, *Ieroschimonahul Daniil Sandu Tudor: omul și opera*, Corifeii rugului aprins (București: Christiana, 2005), 148.

⁵² Cf. *Ibid.*, 149.

⁵³ Sandu Tudor, “Naționalismul la modă”, *Credința: ziar independent de luptă politică și spirituală* An III, no. 397 (27 March 1935), *apud* Tudor and Vasileanu, *Universalism românesc*, 120. (emphasis: PM).

In particular, two of Father Daniil's phrases seem irrefutable. The first one is this:

“The «Nationalism» of all the political parties is not nationalism, but menial dirt and a disgrace. It does not serve the «interest» of the nation, but that of a few”⁵⁴.

From the beginning, the corresponding political ideology has brought into play the defence of so called “national interests”. The nationalist doctrine culturally entered the Romanian provinces sometime in the 19th century, but the term “nationalism” isn't to be found in any dictionary, between the middle of the 18th century and even until 1848. However, in a Romanian dictionary published in the latter year, the expression “national interest” comes up in the definition of the word “national”:

1848 (VR⁵⁵): “NATION, noun. All the inhabitants of a country, of a state who speak the same language. *In politics, place yourself on the side of the nation.”

1848 (VR): “NATIONAL, adj. What is in the interest of the entire nation. * The principle of each government must be a national will.”

Any positive elaboration of “national interest”, which exceeds the call to defend the people's dignity, risks politicization. This may well be the reason why Mihai Eminescu (the maestro of all Romanian hearts) chose to be an anti-modernist nationalist. His life is one of the clearest Romanian proofs of the fact that “nationalism” also possesses a sense completely free from the connection with liberalism and modernity, i.e. free from the corresponding ideology. Eminescu was a conservative monarchist, hostile to the egalitarian “bonjourist” cosmopolitanism which was en vogue in his time.

Eminescu proposed another concept for the definition of the term “national”, one related to its essential meaning – to the concept of *collective consciousness*. In 1882 he explained the latter as *the national being capable of not growing old*⁵⁶. Eventually, it then entered Romanian common sense:

⁵⁴ Sandu Tudor, “Naționalismul bogaților și cel al săracilor”, *Credința: ziar independent de luptă politică și spirituală* An III, no. 427 (5 May 1935), *apud* Tudor and Vasileanu, *Universalism românesc*, 156.

⁵⁵ I.D. Negulici, *Vocabularu romanu de toate vorbele străbune repriimate pînă acumu în limba romana și de tote quelle que suntu a se mai priimi d'acum înainte și mai allesu în sciințe* (București: Tipografia Colegiului, 1848).

⁵⁶ Mihai Eminescu and Dimitrie Vatamaniuc, *Iubirea de patrie: pagini de publicistică* (București: Ed. Militară, 1989), 204.

1882 Eminescu: “national being” = collective conscience capable of not growing old

1998 (DEX⁵⁷): “**NATION**, nations, *noun* Durable community of people, constituted historically as a state, appearing based on a unity of language, territory, economical and psychological life, which is manifested in peculiarities characteristic to the national culture and in the conscience of the common origin and fate.”

2009 (DEX⁵⁸): “**NATION**, nations, *noun* Human community characterized by the unity of the territory, conscience of the historical and cultural identity and, in general, through unity of language and religion.

The care for the genuine national interest – for the national dignity – is thus revealed as the enduring collective conscience (in the sense of a consciousness). What is this consciousness of? In the words of Father Daniil, it is the awareness of the fact that...

“there is an eternal tradition that moves across the centuries, that grows from Romanian art and science through everything that they have in terms of universal and eternal”⁵⁹.

“Romanian universalism” is how Father Daniil entitled one of his articles, but it is also the best title which suits the works of Brâncuși and Enescu, Eliade and Stăniloae, Noica and Eminescu. It also suits the Romanian traditional (“folkloric”) creation, orbiting around the poem “Miorița” – the Romanian embodiment of the feeling of universal solidarity. Romanian universalism, the universalism which stresses the *natural cosmicism and organicism* of thought and of spirituality, was constantly observed by the likes of Vasile Pârvan, Mircea Vulcănescu and Vasile Băncilă in their oeuvres. The message of the corresponding Romanian theory of culture – as it will be briefly exposed hereafter – is about the existence of *national manners of transmitting the one Universal Truth, each of them unquantifiable and unique*.

⁵⁷ Ion Coteanu et al., *DEX: Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române* (București: Univers enciclopedic, 1998).

⁵⁸ Ion Coteanu et al., *DEX: Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române* (București: Univers enciclopedic Gold, 2009).

⁵⁹ Sandu Tudor, “Ce e cu tradiția românească?”, *Credința: ziar independent de luptă politică și spirituală* An III, no. 383 (10 March 1935), *apud* Tudor and Vasileanu, *Universalism românesc*, 85.

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As the biblical eschatology stressed by Father Stăniloae reveals (v.s., 2.1), the achieved Christian completion will be brought into Heavenly Jerusalem in a multitude of *national* forms, as natural forms of communion. Christianly united, they form the same (natural-and-supernatural) Church.

This same essential message was independently thought by Mircea Vulcănescu: “Each nation has, as established by God, a particular countenance [Romanian: *față*], its own manner [ro.: *chip*, cf. gr.: *εἰκών*] of seeing the world and of refracting it for others”⁶⁰. Closely related to this symphony dedicated to God stands the thought, ubiquitous in Romanian traditional culture, of universal interconnectedness: “Each action echoes in the whole world, each gesture propagates its music into the whole”⁶¹. This is the reason why the ultimate goal of the shepherd from “Miorița” is not the one of holding on to his “own” life, but the one of *keeping the right order of things*⁶². It was nothing else that Brâncuși sought in his art, with the means of a Romanian alphabet of forms. He strived for expressing the quiet breathing space of Being. If one eventually sees similarities with other such “alphabets” in the solutions this sculptor and Orthodox hypodeacon came up with, they should be acknowledged to be the result of the universality of the outcome, rather than a result of influences.

As Vulcănescu observes, that which is called “*réalité*” by the French, derived from the latin “*res*”, and which is called “*Wirklichkeit*” by the Germans, derived from “*wirken*” (working, acting), is named by the Romanians by reference to another aspect: It is that which is, paradoxically, eternally (ro.: *dintotdeauna*)⁶³ happening (ro.: *se întâmplă*)⁶⁴, but not because of an intrinsic power, but because of the participation in True Being. This is what sustains Romanian symbols and rituals⁶⁵.

The right order of things, the perfect archetypal coherence is the Christian one. This is the reason why the Church as the mysterious entity permeating all cultures, has integrated not only the languages, but also the local pre-christian beliefs, critically approving the ones that were evidently announcing the contents of the Gospel. The Holy Tradition extends towards all traditions the gift of a sublation which can “regive” them to their true unique selves, to use an Eminescian thought.

⁶⁰ Mircea Vulcănescu, “Dimensiunea românească a existenței [1943]”, *Dialog despre identitatea românească*, vol. 3, Dreptul la memorie (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1992), 286.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 296.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 325.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 325.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p 306-307.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 325.

As St. Silouan says, the whole of humanity is actually comprised in one's own personal existence⁶⁶ and true prayer has a cosmic nature⁶⁷. Summing all of this up, one can say that when each of us return to God the gifts He gave to us, the Maximian, cosmic New Adam comprises us all, while enriching each one's personality. Likewise, as used here, "universalism" neither means an uncritical totality of what happens to be in the fallen world at a particular time, nor does it mean syncretism. It means critically reflecting the universal in the particular – in the given case, the universal in the national. As father Stăniloae says, it does so, strengthening the symphonic unity of the Creation through each particular contribution⁶⁸.

The transcendent sense of the "eternal" tradition father Daniil was writing about, lies specified already in the etymology of the term "tradition": On the one hand, the Latin "tradere" means granting and accepting a spiritual inheritance. On the other, it means a certain productive hope. It is the hope that tradition will continuously grow from everything universal and eternal that a nation has to offer. Accordingly, this second sense of "tradere" is the one of *surrendering the maintained spiritual goods to God, in the hope of their being received in His eternal renewing spring*.

3.2. Assuming one's national identity

So the nation is shaped through the *free*, authentic, universal works of culture, which demand everything their creators have to offer and the highest degree of receptivity which their recipients are capable of. But another kind of sacrifice is likewise demanded – the one made with the purpose of defending cultural freedom. *These two layers have parallel trajectories*. This explains for example why the Romanian cultural tradition is impregnated by the motif of the creative sacrifice, whilst Romanian history barely includes any decade of peace⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ Sophrony Sakharov, *Viața și învățătura starețului Siluan Athonitul*, trans. Ioan Ică (Sibiu: Deisis, 2004), 135

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁶⁸ Stăniloae, "Universalitatea", 151-152.

⁶⁹ The latter observation can count as a general paraphrase of one of Mircea Eliade's leitmotifs, best detailed perhaps in his article "The destiny of the Romanian culture" from 1953, reedited in: Mircea Eliade, *Profetism românesc 1*, ed. Alexandru V. Diță. (București: Roza Vînturilor, 1990), 139-151. Eliade has, indeed, entered a compromise with history – which was and should remain a taboo in the case of great spirits. He did, indeed, succumb to the language of "Tathandlung" and to the idea of a "fertility of conflicts" (a seducing one perhaps, back in those days). He even wrote about a "new man" – however, this thought also marks the red line of this propensity of his. The nature of Eliade's message was never far-right. It is of outmost

Today, a nation is no longer something built of those who “have the same blood” – neither like in the most ancient days, nor like in the ideological and anachronistic 20th century. However, a nation has always been and can only be constituted (founded and maintained) by two classes of people. On the one hand, by those who have shed their blood for it or have dedicated their life to it. On the other hand, by each person alive, who 1. is ready to do the same for the generation to come and 2. is accepted by his or her co-nationals as one of theirs.

In the 7th century, Theophylact Simocattes wrote about the words “*torna, torna, fratre!*”, which had been recorded a century before – they were uttered in the Balkans, by a local soldier, during a byzantine campaign against the Avars⁷⁰. “*Fratre*” is a Proto-Romanian form of “*frate*” (“brother”) and “*torna*” means here “return”⁷¹. Aside proving the formation of the Proto-Romanian language, these words express the Proto-Romanian consciousness of belonging together. For one thousand years the Wallachians and the Moldavians have been living separated, and the Transylvanians have lived under foreign occupation, but

importance to investigate his writings dedicated to social realities in an exact manner. The articles reedited in collections (like the mentioned one) make this easy. In a sequel – Mircea Eliade, *Profetism românesc 2*, ed. Nicolae Georgescu (București: Rosa Vînturilor, 1990) – the reader can find proofs that Eliade was against politicization (pages 79, 92), against racism (pages 54, 73) and against abusing communists (pages 35-38, i.e. his article “Where is our humanness?”). Eliade was, indeed, a promoter of “romanianism”, but his purpose thereby was to encourage his readers “to find its universal values” (cf. page 60). Concerning the topic analysed here, Eliade writes that “the Proto-Romanians were already christian, in a time in which, in the middle of historical catastrophes, the Romanian people was being born. Thus, the sympathy with the cosmos, so very specific to the Romanian spirit, does not manifest itself as a pagan sentiment – but as a form of the christian liturgical spirit” (Eliade, *Profetism românesc 1*, 146). In the Romanian culture one can discern “that magnificent attempt of christianising the cosmos, initiated by the Saint Fathers” as one “outstretched until into our days” (Ibid., 147, original emphasis). As a conclusion, for Eliade “a nation does not engage eternity through its politicians or through its army, through its peasants or through its proletariat – but only through what is being thought, discovered and created” (Eliade, *Profetism românesc 2*, 32).

⁷⁰ Nicolae Saramandu, ‘Torna, torna, fratre’, *Revista de fonetică și dialectologie a Academiei Române XX-XXI* (2002 2001): 233–51.

⁷¹ This oldest recorded sentence, which can count as Proto-Romanian, could soon be regarded as a prophetic motto of a vanishing population, in the light of the present alarming and strange trend: “Between 2000 and 2015, some countries have experienced a rapid growth in the size of their diaspora populations. Among the countries and areas with the fastest average annual growth rate during this period were the Syrian Arab Republic (13.1 per cent per annum), Romania (7.3 per cent per annum), Poland (5.1 per cent per annum) and India (4.5 per cent per annum). In Syria much of this increase was due to the large outflow of refugees and asylum seekers following the conflict in the area.” (United Nations, ‘International Migration Report 2015: Highlights’ (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2016), https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015_Highlights.pdf, 19).

all three of these Romanian populations have used one unitary language. Their sentiments for each other can be considered reflected by the affection felt by their first unifying King, Michael the Brave – as German chronicler Baltasar Walter personally recorded, in the moment of national glory from 1599⁷² – or it can be seen reflected by the centuries-old “three countries fairs”, like the ones held in the province of Vrancea⁷³.

In the face of the first Transylvanian Anti-Romanian laws established by the *Unio Trium Nationum* (1438) and by the religion decrees (1568, 1571) which were given against a Romanian majority⁷⁴, the Church from the other two Romanian provinces supported Orthodox education in the occupied territories by legal and illegal means, up to the time of Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna. The oppressive policy, which lasted for centuries, led to the martyrdom of Transylvanian Martyr Saints (such as St. Visarion Sarai, St. Sofronie from Cioara, St. Oprea Miclăuş, St. Moise Măcinic and St. Ioan from Galeş) and of people’s heroes (e.g. Horea, Cloşca and the other 36 men executed by being broken on the wheel, most of whom were priests; of Avram Iancu, Ioan Buteanu, Pinteza Viteazul et al.). It also led to conflicts with hundreds of casualties (on both sides sometimes, like in Zlatna, 1848). In the 19th and 20th centuries, the same policy led each time to many tens of thousands of people being martyred for being Romanian usually in abhorrent ways, at the hands of leaders like Lajos Kossuth, Vasvari Pal and Miklos Horthy, as well as of executioners like Josef Bem, Albert Wass and others. If, to all of these victims, one adds the heroes and the hundreds of thousands of sacrificed lives of the other two Romanian provinces and, afterwards, the ones of unified Romania, one can get a picture about those who have founded the Romanian nation by shedding their blood for it.

⁷² Ioan Aurel Pop and Ioan Bolovan, *Istoria Transilvaniei*, a II-a, revăzută și adăugită (Cluj-Napoca: Școala ardeală, 2016), 113. Other facts of this kind are indicated in: Mucichescu, ‘Identitate națională și ecclesială’, 114-115.

⁷³ Gheorghiu Geană, “Muntele ca matrice comportamentală, stimul perceptiv și sublimare simbolică”, *Muntele - metaforă fundamentală. relief concret și ascensiune spirituală*, Caietele de la Putna (Suceava: Mușatinii Editura Nicodim Caligrafic, 2013), 85.

⁷⁴ In the 16th century, the Hungarian chronicler Istvan Szamosközy mentions that the Romanian nation inhabited “each of the villages of Transylvania” (Pop and Bolovan, *Istoria transilvaniei*, 113.). Relying on Pop and Bolovan’s study, it is important to notice that “a commission of Ferdinand of Habsburg was sent to Maramureș to evaluate the production of the salt mines in a time of revolts. Very alarmed, it presented the fact that «the inhabitants of the county» «are mostly Romanian and [...] they have the same language, religion and customs as the Moldavians» [Ibid., 106]. After more than a century, the same observation was made by prince Dimitrie Cantemir, in his research on the history of Dacia”. (Mucichescu, ‘Identitate națională și ecclesială’, 115).

Being capable of sacrifice for one's nation, to some degree, is also one of the two criteria of the other class – the one of the living. The other criterion in force for this class is the one of dedicating one's life to the nation, again at least to some degree. The most superior way to do this is through a life dedicated to the highest possible spiritual contributions. These two active criteria are complemented by a supplementary one which is passive: *the act of assuming the national identity through the reception of the masterpieces of the national predecessors*. Furthermore, the condition for the existence of a nation is *the reciprocal consent of all those who consider themselves of the same nation*. All of these thoughts fit the second seemingly irrefutable phrase of Father Daniil:

“To be Romanian means to have in your heart the clear thought and vigilance of the great duty, which tells you that you weren't born only for yourself”⁷⁵.

What Father Daniil foresaw was the Stănilocean ladder of love. In wanting to help the world, after starting with oneself, one usually struggles for this within the nation of birth (or even of choice, sometimes). The sense of this duty and the resulting living love, named *dignity of a nation* by the Church (v.i.), is what *being of* a certain nationality means.

3.3. Does the concept of a national culture contradict the universalist claims of the Church?

In the Gospel of John, chapter 4, Jesus Christ passes over the border between Jews and Samaritans, passing beyond customs and revealing that “a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such as these to worship Him. God is spirit [...]” (Mt 4:24-25). The Saviour calls to transcendence – from valuing national characteristics to valuing truthful worship; from love for one's nation to love for God and for one's brothers in Christ. He asserts the true hierarchy of love without compromise: “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37). But this does not mean that the natural pedagogy of love doesn't involve love for one's nation, on a third-last step, just like it does not mean it doesn't involve love for one's family, at its beginning. Perhaps it could be argued that the “national”

⁷⁵ Sandu Tudor, “A fi român”, *Credința: ziar independent de luptă politică și spirituală* An III, no. 304 (4 December 1934), *apud* Tudor and Vasileanu, *Universalism românesc*, 54.

marks the limit of the natural propensity towards greater unity, a limit which can only be surpassed through the assistance of the Supernatural. But actually, any form of true love is only possible through God's Help.

Therefore, the mission of the Church is to expose each culture "to a process of «transcendence» and transfiguration, according to the pattern of the incarnation of the Lord"⁷⁶, indeed. But at the same time, to quote Nikos Matsoukas, the life of the Church is manifested "necessarily within vestiges – consequently, within the vestiges of a particular national life"⁷⁷. The spiritual creations of the nations are the least that they can "give in return", in an enriched manner, relative to the "wealth" they have received (Matthew 25:14, seqq; Luke 19:11, seqq.). The blossom of each nation is the unique way in which it comes closer to a divine attribute. The result is Humanity's symphony which reflects the perichoresis of God's Attributes.

The true Church is inclusive and open to everybody, and was so from the very beginning, never imposing a special regime on those from a certain nation. But neither local traditions, nor national ones, nor the national synaxaria affect the unity of Orthodoxy. The actual statute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Church of the "Romanian nation" stipulates that "the Romanian Orthodox Church is national and in majority according to the apostolic age, tradition, number of faithful and its special contribution to the life and culture of the Romanian people"⁷⁸.

During the Liturgy, the Church explicitly prays to the Lord God to remember in His kingdom...

"the heroes blessed in death, soldiers and Romanian fighters, of all times and from all places who gave their lives on the battle fields, in camps and in jails for the defence of the country and of our ancestral faith, for the reunification of the nation, for the liberty and dignity of the Romanian people"⁷⁹.

And "again we pray for the faithful Romanian people from all the places, for the rulers of our country, for the leaders of our cities and villages and for the Christ loving army for their health and salvation."⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Valer Bel, *Misiunea*, 75.

⁷⁷ Nikolaos Matsoukas, *Introducere în gnoseologia teologică*, trans. Maricel Popa (București: Editura Bizantină, 1997), 116.

⁷⁸ The Revised Statute for the organization and functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church, art. 5.2.

⁷⁹ Quote from the standard Romanian variant of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom: Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Dumnezeiasca Liturghie a Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2012), 96.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

It is true that the nations will become the new “nation” of the heavenly Jerusalem, united in love for their neighbours, in faith and in Baptism (I Peter 2:9; I Cor 12:12; Rom 3:29; 10:12; Col 3:11). But this does not mean that the sacrifice for the defence and spiritualization of the nations is not approved of by God, as well.

The local Churches themselves helped engender the national cultures in the first place. Now, in their matured state, the autocephalous Churches should not seek to drop out, repulse or refute cultural goods allegedly “stained” by “national character”. As shown by Father Stăniloae and by other analyses, like the current one, instead of being a stain, the national character marks the universal core-contribution of what each local Church eschatologically offers God in return. The concept of nation does not build upon the one of race. According to the meanings exposed here, they must never be put together.

Unfortunately, last year, the document supported by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and entitled “For the Life of the World” did just that. However, by God becoming “incarnate as a Jew, born within the body of Israel”⁸¹ (*nota bene* albeit with a lineage which includes gentiles, and a celestial Kingdom to which all nations are summoned to), *the nation and the national are not undone, but rather sanctioned, legitimated*. This document (which endorses a rather hostile tone towards the state, seemingly not realizing that a worse form of domination is yet to come) seems to disavow even the historic indigenization of the Gospel, while trying to pit the concepts of universal “human goods” and of “national culture” against each other⁸². It seeks to do the latter by equating

⁸¹ John Chryssavgis et al., ‘For The Life of the World. Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church’, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, March 2020, https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_km0Xa4sy69OV&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1&_56_INSTANCE_km0Xa4sy69OV_languageId=en_US.

⁸² Predominantly, the document in question raises fundamental objections against (any kind of) state authority (II, §§ 8-10; cf. VII, §67). Even more problematical – from the point of view of the present article – is the fact that it illicitly conflates ideological nationalism with the love for the nation, thereby discrediting both. The document may have served well in shedding light upon the existence of „certain crippling limitations” imposed upon the Church by past Christian states, crippling limitations which occurred in „transient political forms of the Orthodox past, such as the Byzantine Empire” (II, §10). However, the objective take within this document, which – indeed – *also* mentions the possibility given under such a rule „for the gestation and formation of a distinct Orthodox ethos”, as well as unspecified „special advantages of the Church” (ibd.), could also have mentioned the fact that *no Ecumenical Council could have taken place and enforce its decisions without this Byzantine Empire*. The implications are obvious. Besides, mentioning such a fact could certainly not have lead anybody to mistake a political system for the essence of the Apostolic Church. After this passage, once again by generalizing (in a way which could be interpreted as an insurance against having to assume responsibility for the claim), the document accuses the Orthodox

“national culture” and the ideological “national interest”, in the hope of excluding any relation to one’s nation from the concept of human dignity.

The present study has shown the main reasons why any such effort is doomed to fail. The fact that the “national character” is no “stain” cannot be contradicted by any contemporary shift in “public opinion”, regardless of how voguish or violently intrusive it may be. To assume that diabolical hate can stem from true love goes against any form of (Christian) logic. Therefore, if even the faintest sense exists, in which the love for one’s parents, for one’s community and for one’s nation is *true* love, it rebukes any charge of idolatry. Indeed, that “the Kingdom of God alone is the Christian’s first and last loyalty, and all other allegiances are at most provisional, transient, partial, and incidental”⁸³ is *self-evident*, in the light of Matthew 10:37⁸⁴. But there is a crucial difference between the claim that “all other allegiances” are “replaced by a singular fidelity to Christ’s law of charity”⁸⁵, and the *fact* that no allegiance can be compared with the allegiance to Christ, or that any allegiance within the hierarchy of love is transfigured, *sublated* by a higher form, no other Love being greater than God Himself, in the end. So if love for one’s parents, community, nation can in any way be considered true, the wild guess that racial discrimination and chauvinism originate not from ideology and idolatry, but from this love, is most obviously preposterous.

The message of the Church has entered the very fabric of national cultures. It enriches it, it reinvests it with meaning – this is what “sublation” means. It has cleansed the lenses of our souls and it has provided them with a better sight of the world as it is in itself. Who could conceive the *Russian* Dostoevsky without his *Christian* fibre? Lastly, it is important to notice how utterly erroneous it would be to think that this line of reasoning, as long as its

Church of allowing for the frequent „conflation of national, ethnic, and religious identity”. Actually (as proven by the examples mentioned in parts 1 and 3 of the present study), the Church has promoted and imbued national cultures in order to offer various nations a *means* for ascending to their *own particular-universal Christian identity*. Any such „conflation” as criticized by the document is either only an external appearance (which the process of indigenization may have in the eyes of the uninitiated), or an historic exception (which then has to be named). According to the line of reasoning of the document, the indigenization „has often inhibited the Church in its vocation to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples” (ibd.). This still has to be proven, because the *indigenization has mostly led to the opposite, i.e. to christianization*. Further places within the document, where the concepts of state-authority and national dignity are challenged, are sections II, §§11-12 and V, §42, §§46-47.

⁸³ Chryssavgis et al., ‘For The Life’, II, §9.

⁸⁴ It is basically self-evident, even though the way how each of these attributes do apply to the love for “your neighbour” would remain a matter of argument.

⁸⁵ Chryssavgis et al., ‘For The Life’, I, §6.

premises are observed, could ever lead to an identification of Christianity with nationality. In fact, what it prospectively leads to is the inverse. (An accurate sense of the right hierarchy is crucial, in all these matters.)

Christianity will endure as a living entelechy until the eschaton – that is, until the Gospel will be preached *to all nations* (Mt 24:14, “πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν”).

4. Conclusion

The (non-ideological) concept of a *national* culture does not contradict the universalist claims of the Church. Accordingly, the Church is entitled to regard *nationalism* as a form of love (unlike its ideological version, which is mainly a form of sin). Behind the ideological sense of “nationalism” lies the one which it caricatures – the natural love for one’s nation.

Indeed, love is corruptible. But it is also legitimate. It has been shown that even Christ endorsed the nation as a form of communion. But this form of communion is not the final one. It has its own sublation. Nationalism in the proposed sense can therefore be seen as the third-last essential step in the hierarchy of love, the second-last being the Church and the Keystone of the ladder being Jesus Christ. This true meaning of nationalism is supported by the Romanian sources used and by Father Stăniloae especially, as it was seen in section 3.

Despite being an almost forgotten one, this meaning of nationalism calls for affection towards all other existing national spiritual creations, all of which embody a transcendental universal Tradition. Such masterpieces are shaped by universal national manners of transmitting One and the Same Truth. Each of these manners is unquantifiable and unique. Embracing such a tradition implies gaining the consciousness that you weren’t born only for yourself. It implies the disposition to (culturally) help the world become a better place by making use of its means – whether or not all particular elements a subject uses are endemic and whether or not the use of the “language” of a certain tradition is deliberate. It furthermore implies *accepting a national identity* (also) through assenting to the prior advances made by national predecessors and through the willingness, at least to some degree and to (sacrificially) dedicate one’s life to one’s nation. (For example by making spiritual contributions, but sometimes also just by the simple act of deciding to live in one’s home country, “in spite of it all”). Does this mean that a “nationalist” would *not* choose to die for a foreigner, in a situation analogous to one in which he would choose to do so for his nation? Unequivocally, according to the described framework such a decision would make no sense.

To some degree, the present account has also demonstrated from a Romanian perspective that no contradiction exists between the national and the universal. If this is true, and if the Holy Scripture, together with the Holy Tradition are indeed to bring Salvation, the consequence can only be that the inherent traits of human culture make it the predestined recipient of the Christian message. This would only reinforce the christian confession that the essence of human culture, as a medium, intrinsically fits the content of the Revelation.

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